

Celebrating Diversity by Recognizing Humanity

February is African American History Month, and it brings to mind many of the black lawyers who have made a profound impact in Texas and across the country—people like Thurgood Marshall, Charles Hamilton Houston, Constance Baker Motley, Johnnie Cochran, and too many others to name here. Black lawyers have enriched our criminal justice and educational systems. They have made our democracy fairer and more inclusive. They have brought justice to many who otherwise never would have found open eyes or ears before the courts. They have given hope to

some of the most marginalized members of our society. I could go on.

It seems odd to me that diversity is often met with fear and resistance. I struggle to think of examples of where it hasn't been a benefit. From a Darwinian perspective, it could easily be argued that diversity regularly and predictably increases the adaptability of the organizations it affects, thereby making them more likely to survive. In my experience, diversity rarely seeks to replace the status quo; it seeks to enhance the system that is already in effect. In conformity with our analogy, diversity allows an organization to

evolve and thrive. Certainly by embracing diversity within our bar, we will find ourselves stronger, more educated, and better equipped to take on the crucial problems of our day.

As part of our commitment to diversity, TYLA is putting the finishing touches on the plans for its annual diversity dinner. This year, Juan Melendez, who spent 17 years behind bars for a murder he did not commit, will discuss some of the problems that led to his wrongful conviction. Throughout the evening, we will try to better understand how we can approach the criminal justice system in a racially blind way to see that justice—and not tragedy—is the end result of criminal prosecution. I hope you will join us in Dallas for this year's event and consider contributing to our efforts to make positive change through embracing diversity.

Finally, I hope you will join me this month in remembering the significant contributions black lawyers have made. More importantly, I hope you will join me in celebrating the diverse ideas and people within the bar—not just this month, but year-round. Becoming more diverse provides our bar with the best opportunity to serve our clients and to achieve a level of success that we have not even begun to dream possible.

I will leave you with my favorite piece of wisdom from one of the greatest jurists in history, Thurgood Marshall: "In recognizing the humanity of our fellow beings, we pay ourselves the highest tribute."



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